

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the Senate respecting the postal convention between the United States and Great Britain.

FEBRUARY 4, 1853.—Referred to the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads.

FEBRUARY 5, 1853.—Ordered to be printed.

To the Senate of the United States:

In compliance with the resolution of the Senate of the 11th ultimo, asking for information with regard to the execution of the postal convention between the United States and Great Britain, I transmit a report from the Secretary of State, and the documents which accompanied it.

MILLARD FILLMORE.

WASHINGTON, February 3, 1853.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, February 3, 1853.

The Secretary of State, to whom has been referred the resolution of the Senate of the 11th ultimo, requesting the President, if not incompatible with the public interest, to communicate to that body "such information as he possesses in regard to the execution of the postal convention between the United States and Great Britain, stating whether postal matter is forwarded by the English government in conformity with the provisions of such convention," has the honor to lay before the President the accompanying papers, embracing all the information possessed by this department on the subject of the resolution.

Respectfully submitted.

EDWARD EVERETT.

To the PRESIDENT of the United States.

LIST OF ACCOMPANYING PAPERS.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster, August 16, 1850.—Extract.
Same to same, (with enclosures,) October 24, 1850.—Copy.
Same to same, (with enclosure,) December 6, 1850.—Extract.
Same to same, (with enclosure,) February 7, 1851.—Extract.
Same to same, (with enclosure,) February 21, 1851.—Extract.
Same to same, (with enclosures,) February 26, 1851.—Extract.
Same to same, (with enclosures,) May 22, 1851.—Copy.
Mr. Hall to same, June 21, 1851.—Copy.
Mr. Lawrence to same, (with enclosure,) August 8, 1851.—Copy.
Same to same, (with enclosures,) August 15, 1851.—Extract.
Mr. Davis to same, (with enclosure,) September 23, 1851.—Copy.
Mr. Lawrence to same, (with enclosure,) October 24, 1851.—Copy.
Same to same, (with enclosures,) April 30, 1852.—Copy.
Same to same, May 7, 1852.—Copy.
Same to same, September 30, 1852.—Extract.
Mr. Hubbard to Mr. Everett, January 14, 1853.—Copy.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 71.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, August 16, 1850.

SIR: * * * I also found, on my arrival in London, that the negotiations carried on by my predecessor for the conclusion of a postal arrangement between France, England, and the United States, in accordance with the provisions of the 12th article of the convention of December, 1848, were yet unsuccessful. The immediate importance and urgency of the Mosquito question prevented me from taking this up at once; and when, after a further delay, occasioned by my own illness, I applied to Lord Clanricarde to resume negotiations, I found him too much of an invalid to attend to business. I have since had several interviews with him, unattended with any important results. It will probably be my duty before long to communicate to you the termination of the negotiations. I am obliged to confess that I fear we shall be unsuccessful.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 83.]

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
London, October 24, 1850.

SIR: I propose to treat in this despatch of the postal relations between the United States, this country, and France, and to ask instructions from the department as to my course.

During the pendency of the negotiations which resulted in the postal convention of December, 1848, it was proposed by Mr. Bancroft to regulate in that instrument the charges on the continental correspondence of the United States in transit across England. In the first draught from the British government an article was inserted for such regulation, with a proviso excepting France from its operation. Mr. Bancroft objected to this very strongly, and very properly, but was told, in reply, that the treaty stipulations between England and France rendered its insertion necessary, as, without it, the latter power would have just cause of complaint against the former. On the 14th of December, 1848, our Post Office Department issued instructions to abandon the question of the transit rates entirely; but, before they could have left that city, the convention was signed in London, with the 12th article, establishing such rates generally in England, especially exempting France from its operation, and providing for an invitation from the two powers to that country to enter into a *tripartite* arrangement. It was an unfortunate thing for the interests of the United States that this was left the subject for future negotiations. France was then (as I have been assured) ready to negotiate at once, waiving the privileges of the convention which England set up in her behalf; and the United States had the Canada transit rates in their control, to compel her Majesty's government to settle the question in a just manner.

The treaty was ratified, and our correspondence with France was left in the condition in which it yet remains, viz: the postage on a single letter of a half ounce from any place in France to the shores of the United States is three francs, of which Great Britain takes two francs and France one; that is, England has, for taking such a letter from Calais to New York, 1s. 8d. Deduct the sea-rate of 8d. fixed by the convention, and it leaves 1s. as the transit rate across England on a single letter of a half ounce. I think closed mails are not sent by the Liverpool steamers to France. But if they were, and the computation were made according to the 9th article of the convention, the United States would be forced to pay for such transit at two rates to the ounce, with the addition of 25 per cent., amounting to 2s. 6d. sterling the ounce; while they would, by the same mode of computation, receive for performing the same service with the Canada mails 12½ cents, or 6½d. sterling per ounce. Other unjust inequalities and causes of complaint have since manifested themselves, which I shall notice soon.

My predecessor was sensible of this great injustice. Having been instructed by the department, under date of the 8th of January, 1849, to open negotiations for the purpose of carrying into effect the 12th article, either exclusively or jointly with Mr. Rush, as the business might be conducted at London or Paris, on the 16th of February, 1849, he addressed a confidential note to Mr. Thayer, a copy of which you will find with his despatch No. 121, asking, among other things, whether France would meet a reduction on the part of England by a proportionate reduction, and whether she would establish the half ounce as the standard for the single rate; to which, on the 20th of March, he received a reply answering his inquiries *seriatim*, and saying that France could not establish a half ounce as the single rate, and that she would reduce in proportion to any reduction Great Britain would make. A copy of this letter accompanied Mr. Bancroft's despatch No. 126.

Proposals were next exchanged between this legation and the Post Office Department, and mutually declined. The United States proposed to reduce the English transit rate to 6d. the ounce, while Great Britain proposed to establish it at 1s. ½d. in lieu of the 2s. then and now taken. Copies of the memoranda and correspondence on this subject were enclosed in my predecessor's despatch No. 129. Mr. Bancroft next visited Paris, under instructions, and, while there, wrote a note to Mr. Thayer, which drew from that gentleman a reply, (a copy of which accompanied his despatch No. 136,) in which he said distinctly that France would reduce one-half in the event of a reduction by England, and authorized Mr. B. to say so to the British government; which he accordingly did, on the 16th of May following, in an official note to Lord Palmerston, which you will also find with his despatch 136. Again, on the 2d of June, and still again on the 20th of July, he wrote to Lord Palmerston urging the execution of the convention, and was told each time that the question had been referred to other departments of the government (the Post Office and the Treasury) more immediately interested in it. At length, on the 4th of August, while Mr. Bancroft was in Paris, he received a letter from the Post Office Department

asking specifically and officially the proposals of France and the United States, to which he answered by a reference to his letter of the 16th of May to Lord Palmerston. At the same time a similar letter was addressed to the French office. Copies of all this correspondence, as well as of the French answer, were enclosed in Mr. Bancroft's 142.

Things rested at this point; and on the 31st of August Mr. Bancroft sailed for America, leaving Mr. Davis in charge.

On the 9th of October I reached London. Before, however, leaving America, I had seen Mr. Bancroft, and had been advised by him that the Post Office Department was the most difficult to deal with, and that I had better, therefore, open at once with the Treasury. (For you will see that, this being at once a financial, postal, and political question, I was liable to be sent about from one department to the other in settling it.) In an interview with your predecessor, also, I was reminded of the importance of the question, and instructed, if possible, to bring the negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion.

I found on my arrival that no answer had been received from the Post Office touching Mr. Bancroft's proposal; *neither has there been as yet.*

The affairs of Central America were deemed of sufficient importance to require all my attention when I first entered on the duties of my office; and then Sir Charles Wood, myself, and Lord Clanricarde were successively each seriously ill, so that some months elapsed before it was possible to resume the negotiations. Not before the latter part of June was Lord Clanricarde well enough to be seen, and then he promised to make me a proposition. I have never received such, unless the informal note of the 9th of July (B) can be called a proposition.

Conceiving myself authorized by Lord Clanricarde to invite Mr. Thayer to come to London and negotiate here, I addressed a letter to him on the 12th of July to that effect, (C.) * * * * It was plain to me that the interests of the United States were to be made to yield to the desire of France on the one hand to maintain her high inland rates, and to the wish of England on the other to preserve her unjust transit charges. I was not willing to yield without another effort. I was sensible, too, that, if this proposed arrangement were concluded, it would be quite useless to talk of effecting a better. I accordingly wrote to Mr. Thayer (F) advising him to delay awhile; and after several interviews with Lord Clanricarde, in which we failed to agree, I addressed him a note, on the 19th of August, (G,) which I hope will be approved by the department. On the 27th I received a reply to this note, (H,) which I think you will concur with me in pronouncing to be very unsatisfactory. But one course seemed to me to be left—to go at once to Lord Palmerston. But first I thought it worth while to know yet more definitely the views of France, which seemed to have changed so unaccountably. I accordingly instructed Mr. Davis, who was at that time on the Continent, to proceed to Paris and “see Mr. Thayer, and ascertain how the postal relations stood between France and England.” I also told him that “I should be glad to know how the division was made between the two offices,” and, if possible, “to obtain from Mr. Thayer a distinct proposition upon the subject of closed mails,” so as to “bring Lord Clanricarde to an equitable settlement.” The manner

in which Mr. Davis performed this service, and the views of the French government, can be obtained from the extracts from his letters marked I. His report determined me at once to address to Lord Palmerston the official note K, and I am assured by him that he will take the subject into consideration at an early day.

In the event of the acceptance of my proposition by the British government, (which I do not entirely despair of, though I scarcely look for it,) and the negotiations with France which must thereupon ensue being brought to a favorable issue, it will become necessary to determine the manner of carrying out the intentions of the three governments. In that event, I hope to be furnished with the views of the department, and with full authority to carry them into effect.

On the other hand, if her Majesty's government refuse to carry out the convention of 1848 in the spirit in which it was conceived, (which I confess I fear,) it will be my duty to communicate that fact to the department, and to await its instructions in regard to it.

It is unnecessary to point out to so eminent a statesman as yourself the great importance to the United States of cheap and rapid postal communication with the continent of Europe. The evils under which we are at present suffering are not alone the unjust rates which I have already exposed. Not only is a single letter of a half ounce subjected to a transit charge of one shilling, but, if it be brought or sent by an American steamer, it is also subjected to a double sea-rate. If the letter be from the United States, the sea-rate is prepaid there, and is again charged in England; and if it be from France, it is prepaid there, and again collected in America. This is equally the case whether sent by the Southampton or the Liverpool steamer. In the former case it is particularly unjust, as, if the post office at New York, instead of mixing the French and English mails, (as I am told they do,) would put up the French mails by themselves, and instruct the mail-agent to put them on board the Havre steamer at Southampton, there could be no just pretence for the English government to charge even a transit rate. The triplicate arrangement, if it could be effected, would reach and regulate all these things; and I sincerely hope that Lord Palmerston, looking at the question in a broader light than his colleagues, will feel disposed to answer the just demands of the United States.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

—
C.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
London, July 12, 1850.

SIR: You are undoubtedly aware that, by the twelfth article of the postal convention between Great Britain and the United States, signed at London December 15, 1848, the contracting parties agreed to invite France to enter into communication with them, without loss of time, in

order to effect such arrangement for the conveyance of letters and newspapers and closed mails through the territories of the United Kingdom, of the United States, and of France, respectively, as might be most conducive to the interests of the three countries.

When I entered upon my duties as minister here in October last, I found that, in the execution of this provision, a protracted correspondence had been carried on between yourself on the part of France, Lord Clanricarde on the part of her Majesty's government, and my predecessor on the part of the United States. The pendency of other and important negotiations first, and after that severe illness, prevented me from immediately resuming those negotiations at the point where my predecessor had left them; and, when I desired to call the attention of her Majesty's government to the subject, I found Lord Clanricarde an invalid, entirely unable to attend to business. Although yet very weak, and confined to his house, he has so far recovered as to be able partially to resume his duties, and I have had one or two interviews with him. I find that he is of opinion that, by your presence in London, we may soon be enabled to agree on some plan for carrying out the provisions of the convention; and he has authorized me to invite you to come to London at any time between the 24th and the 30th of this month for that purpose.

I have the honor to convey to you this request in his behalf, and to add to it my own to the same effect, as the representative of the United States, as the interests of the three countries suffer by the delay in the settlement of this question.

I have the honor to be, sir, with great consideration, your obedient servant,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Monsieur E. J. THAYER, &c., &c., &c.

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F.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, July 25, 1850.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of yesterday. I have read with attention the letter brought to me by Mr. Rives, which you propose to send to Lord Clanricarde. If the postal arrangement proposed to be made between Great Britain and France should be carried into effect, I should be forced to recommend to the government of the United States to give notice at once to terminate the postal convention of December, 1848. I have not stated this to Lord Clanricarde; nor can I see him till Saturday, the 27th instant. I wish to make one more effort to carry out fairly the provisions of the twelfth article of that convention, as it is very desirable to avoid extreme measures. I can see no alternative but the one I have marked out, if the plan proposed between France and England should be adopted; for, from your not being able to agree in your mode of accounting to each other, the United States is made to suffer severely, and in a manner not warranted by the provisions of the convention.

I will therefore ask you to do me the favor to suspend further action on the subject till I can have an opportunity of seeing Lord Clanricarde, and, if necessary, of presenting our very just and equitable case on paper, both of which will be done at the earliest possible moment.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient, humble servant,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mons. E. J. THAYER, &c., &c., &c.

G.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
138 Piccadilly, August 19, 1850.

MY LORD: On the 15th day of December, 1848, the United States of America and her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom concluded a convention, by which, among other things, they agreed "to invite France to enter into communication with them, *without loss of time*, in order to effect such arrangements for the conveyance of letters and newspapers and closed mails through the territories of the United States, of the United Kingdom, and of France, respectively, as may be most conducive to the interests of the three countries."

This article indicates the time within which the invitation is to be extended, and the basis on which the proposed arrangement is to be effected; and yet nearly two years have elapsed since the signing of the convention, during which time the interests of the United States have been daily suffering, and no arrangement has been made. As your lordship and myself have had several personal interviews on this subject, and as I find by the records of this legation that a correspondence was carried on between my predecessor and your lordship on the same, I address myself directly to you, in the hope that we may agree upon some way for carrying this article into full effect, without the further delay necessary in conducting a correspondence through the Foreign Office.

The basis indicated for the proposed arrangement is that which "may be most conducive to the interests of the three countries." Its object will be to transport the correspondence between the United States and France, and *vice versa*, across the territory of Great Britain, on such a basis. At present that is not done; for, if it were, there would be no necessity for making such an arrangement. It follows, therefore, that one of the three countries suffers injustice under the present arrangement, inasmuch as it is continued in existence in opposition to an agreement to enter into negotiations to terminate it by the substitution of another arrangement, effected with reference to their mutual interests. It requires little examination to perceive that it is the United States that is injured.

The postage in the United States is established at five cents (or $2\frac{1}{2}d.$) the single rate for any distance not exceeding three hundred miles, and 10 cents (or $5d.$) for any distance exceeding three hundred miles. The single rate is the half ounce and under, the double rate between

the half ounce and the ounce, the treble between the ounce and the ounce-and-a-half, and so on progressively. But these charges are varied, in favor of letters arriving by mail from England, so far that such letters pay only five cents the single rate, without reference to distance.

The United States receive for transporting closed British mails from the port of arrival on the Atlantic to Canada *6*d.* per ounce, with an addition of 25 per cent.

The sea-rate on letters transmitted by mail steamers is fixed at 8*d.* the half ounce. If brought in closed mails, 16*d.* per ounce is charged, with the addition of 25 per cent. for this mode of computation, making in all one shilling eight pence (or 40 cents) per ounce.

The postage of the United Kingdom for letters originating within the kingdom is fixed at a penny the single rate of a half ounce, 2*d.* the double rate, 4*d.* the treble rate, &c. These rates are varied, against letters arriving by mail from the United States, so far that such letters pay an inland rate of 1½*d.* for a single letter of a half ounce, and are subject to the same scale of advancement as letters originating in the kingdom.

Letters to the United States from France, and *vice versa*, pay to the British government a transit rate of a shilling, or thereabouts.† Your lordship can state this more definitely than I, as I do not know the division made between France and England.

Now, it is evident that such an arrangement as the foregoing is anything but "conducive to the interests" of England and the United States, leaving France out of the question for the present. I am not disposed to complain of the fact that a distinction is made in the United States *in favor* of letters arriving from the United Kingdom, while, in the United Kingdom, the distinction is made *against* those arriving from the United States; because I am well aware that the two countries have solemnly agreed that it should be so. But it is also true that the same compact contains a further agreement to invite France to enter into negotiations with us for extending the arrangements commenced by that convention; and I need not argue to your lordship that such an agreement implies the further promise that, if France consents to treat on the indicated basis, the parties will jointly treat with her. And I find in the incorporation of this article into the convention, not only that the injustice of the present system is admitted, but that Great Britain holds out the prospect of its removal as an inducement to the United States to enter into a compact otherwise unjust to their citizens.

I invite your lordship to look at what the United States do under this convention. They transport your closed mails nearly twice the distance for half‡ the money for which you perform the same service, the distance from New York or Boston to Canada being much greater

* There was a slight clerical error in the copy sent to Lord C., which is of course preserved here. Instead of 6*d.*, it should have been 5*d.* The argument is stronger after the correction.

A. L.

† This rate is more exactly stated in the despatch enclosing this.

‡ Had I known the division of the postage between France and England, I should have said one-fourth, as it is as near that fraction as possible.

than that from Liverpool to Boulogne or Calais. They distribute your letters in distances varying from three hundred to three thousand miles at a uniform rate of 5 cents the single letter; while their own citizens are charged for the same service 10 cents the single letter when the distance exceeds three hundred miles. I am not able to furnish your lordship with the proportion of ship-letters to and from America which the American post office have to transport over three hundred miles. I think, however, you would be surprised at the number could I do so. Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, Savannah; all the cotton, rice, and sugar States; New Orleans, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburg, with the whole valley of the Mississippi; Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, and the entire lake country—indeed, with the exception of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, all the important commercial points in the Union—are situated beyond that distance. And yet these all rely on the mail steamers almost entirely to carry their correspondence to and from Europe. Nor is this all. The number of non-commercial correspondents is also very great. The towns that I speak of have a large European population, composed of Irish and others. The same may be said of every large town in the Union. European emigrants, too, are rapidly filling up the new States, or forming still newer ones further west. I think I shall not much over-state if I say the emigration this year will amount to a thousand a day. For some years past it has been nearly as large, and is steadily on the increase. All these emigrants correspond with their friends on this side of the Atlantic through the mail steamers running between Liverpool and Boston and New York, with the exception of the few carried to and from Bremen; and I can assure your lordship that the revenue accruing from this source is not inconsiderable.

Nor is the transportation of mails in the United States so easy as in Great Britain. The new States of the Union are all extensive in territory, with a sparse population, and the imperfect facilities for commercial intercourse that might be looked for. Missouri, Texas, Arkansas, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin are each greater in extent than England. Other States, older than these, have not yet enough population to produce a revenue equal to the expenditure in carrying the mails. In the Territories the population is still sparser, and the difficulty in the transmission of the post still greater. In all the States I have enumerated and alluded to, and, indeed, in very many of the older ones also, most of the mail-bags are carried upon the backs of horses, or in stage-wagons or coaches.

I have not alluded to this with any desire of finding fault with the postal rates between here and the United States, so far as they are fixed by the convention. I bring it to your lordship's notice only as bearing on so much of that convention as yet remains unexecuted. We see the United States making a distinction in favor of Great Britain, (as far as the direct correspondence is concerned,) and Great Britain making one adverse to the United States. We also see the United States performing a service with such correspondence much greater and very much more expensive than that performed by Great Britain for a rate less than double in amount. And we naturally ask why? I find the answer in the 12th article of the convention. The United

States proposed to themselves to make England the focus for their continental correspondence; and England agreed, in view of that, to join in inviting France to enter into an arrangement, so that the continental mails to and from the United States might pass across the territory of Great Britain in closed bags.

The views that both Great Britain and the United States entertain of the value of such services, and of the compensation their "interests" "respectively" require to be paid for it, are definitely determined by the convention. The United States are called upon by that instrument to render exactly the same service to Great Britain, (except that the distance is nearly twice as great,) and the compensation is fixed at "two rates to the ounce, with the addition of twenty-five per cent. on the amount of postage, to compensate the loss that would be otherwise sustained by this mode of computation."

Here is the joint judgment of Great Britain and the United States as to what is conducive to their respective interests. The convention provides for an arrangement conducive to the interests of France as well. I believe the interests of France harmonize in this respect with those of the other nations, and that a settlement somewhat on this basis would be accepted by her, and a corresponding reduction made in her rates. When the postal convention of December 15, 1848, was made, France was excluded from the operation of the first four sections of the twelfth article, because, as was alleged, she had certain rights by an existing treaty which would be invaded by such a course. I do not know whether that treaty is yet in force. If it be not, the objection is removed. If it be, I believe France is ready to meet Great Britain and the United States in the effort to relieve the continental correspondence of the latter from the unjust burdens to which it is now subjected. The last clause of the twelfth article lies thus far a dead letter. I propose that it be executed in the spirit in which it was conceived.

The transit rate to Canada is two rates to the ounce, with twenty-five per cent. addition. Instead of adopting this mode of computation, (as the French method differs from it,) I propose a fixed transit rate of six pence the ounce for the transmission of closed mails, and that France be invited to join us in a proportionate reduction of her rates. I am aware that this proposal has been substantially before your lordship already; but I renew it in the hope that, as it is founded in justice, you will adopt it. Then the injustice the United States have for nearly two years submitted to would be stopped; England would probably, in carrying into effect the provisions of the twelfth article, meet with no loss of revenue; and France, also reducing her rates, would doubtless, by the increase of correspondence with a nation with whom she has large commercial dealings, make up for any deficiency to be feared from the reduction. The rates between France and the United States are too high, and not in accordance with the spirit of the age, which would throw the means of communication open to all. I am induced to hope that your lordship, looking at the subject in this yet broader light, will be still more forcibly convinced of the justice of my conclusions.

Asking the favor of an early consideration of this proposition, I have the honor to be your lordship's most obedient, humble servant,
 ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

THE MARQUIS OF CLANRICARDE,
 &c., &c., &c.

—
 H.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
 August 26, 1850.

DEAR SIR: The different departments of the Queen's government, and, I believe, the foreign missions in London, were lately reminded that the formal transaction of official business must be carried on through the Foreign Office.

I am therefore not in a position to express to you officially the opinion of her Majesty's government upon the proposition contained in the letter of the 19th instant which I have had the honor to receive from you. But as the questions to which it refers are matter for the consideration of the Post Office and the Treasury, I do not hesitate to convey to you my opinion upon them, in which I have reason to believe my colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, concurs.

There has been no reluctance or delay upon our part to execute the 12th article of the convention of December, 1848. On the contrary, we have offered at once to treat letters in transit between France and the United States upon the same footing as our own letters, and to alter the treaty with France which subjects them to a heavy charge, without seeking from France any compensation whatever. We proposed that letters from the United States, when they had reached Liverpool, should be forwarded to France on the same terms as letters originating in Liverpool; and, *vice versa*, that letters from France should be put on board the packet to cross the Atlantic with no other charge than that to which letters from France to Liverpool are subjected.

What rate is levied upon such letters in France and in the United States, I cannot say; but the reduction in the amount to be received by the British Post Office would be from 3s. 4d. per ounce to 2s. 8½d.—within a fraction of twenty per cent.

I think this was a liberal proposal, in accordance with the spirit of the convention of 1848; and it is not our fault if two years have elapsed without the perfection of that convention.

I cannot advise my government to put this transit correspondence upon a better footing than that of the United Kingdom, without some corresponding modification by France of other arrangements, with which the question of transit rates was in former instances connected.

But you say we ought to make the sacrifice and the great reduction you desire, because British letters are treated in some respects, in America, better than letters of the United States; while American letters are charged a higher rate than British in this country.

I hope and believe the convention of 1848 has been advantageous both to the United States and to England, and that we need not dis-

cuss the provisions which have proved thus beneficial; and I am ignorant of the internal postage rates of the United States. I must, however, remark, in reference to a comparison you have instituted, that mere distances of transport by no means constitute the great expense of well-contrived postal arrangements. The simple delivery of letters is a heavy expense; and this, I understand, is only performed at all in a few cities of the United States, while in this country letters are delivered to houses in every town and in most villages of the kingdom. And this is but one of several items to be mentioned in comparing postal services and expenses.

But you are mistaken in supposing that American letters are really subjected to a higher rate than British in this country by the convention of 1848. The postage chargeable upon a letter in the United Kingdom is two pence. It is on consideration of prepayment that half price is taken. It would be difficult to ascertain the exact proportions (and these vary constantly) of paid and unpaid inland letters. The rate of $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ was agreed upon with Mr. Bancroft as a perfectly fair rate, after much consideration. Your present proposition, however, is to reduce the charge upon closed mails between France and America from 3s. 4d. to 6d. per ounce.

It is impossible for me to recommend my government to make any such vast reduction and such a sacrifice of revenue without some compensating sacrifice on the part of France.

I am afraid I cannot offer to reopen negotiations with the French government immediately, because, as you know, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in the country, and I am on the eve of my departure for Ireland; but, if you continue to think the diminution we have offered insufficient, I shall be ready in a couple of months' time to enter again into communication with the French post office authorities. In the mean time, I cannot admit that the British government has shown reluctance to execute the twelfth article of our late treaty in the liberal spirit of that convention.

I have the honor to remain, dear sir, &c.,

CLANRICARDE.

ABBOTT LAWRENCE, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

I.

Extracts from Mr. Davis's letters.

PARIS, September 24, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR: * * * * *

I went yesterday to see the head* of the bureau of foreign correspondence in the post office. * * * He told me he had read your letter to Lord Clanricarde, (and spoke very complimentarily of it;) but, added he, in French, "Mr. Lawrence is in error in one thing—it is not you, but we, who are injured by the delay." I asked him, under your in-

* Mr. Thayer was not in town when Mr. Davis arrived.

structions, what were the present postal relations between France and England? "Those established by the treaty of 1843," was the reply. "There has been no change as yet; but France only waits the assent of the United States to accept the proposition of Lord Clanricarde." "What division is made between France and England of the money levied on each letter?" "France takes one and England two portions." "What is the single rate?" "A quarter of an ounce, and the whole postage is doubled, trebled, quadrupled, &c., in that proportion. Thus, one franc fifty centimes pays a $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce letter from Paris to New York; three francs, a $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce, &c., &c." "Does the proportion remain the same in the division of the money?" "Yes." "Then this makes it plainly the interest of England to continue the present state of things, because, by the treaty of 1848, the half ounce is established as the single rate, whereas, by the actual operation of the treaties between France and England, the quarter ounce is the single rate through to New York, and England doubles, trebles, &c., twice as rapidly as she ought to."

* * * * At dinner the above conversation was substantially repeated. I showed him Lord Clanricarde's letter to you, (in confidence.)

* * * He expressed a wish again, strongly, to accept the British offer. He said it would benefit France and the United States also, (not as much as it ought to, indeed;) that we (the United States) would be no worse off, not being parties to it; that the next year we should be having weekly steamers to Havre, and France would treat with the United States for receiving and carrying their whole continental correspondence, to the exclusion of England; that we, if dissatisfied with this arrangement, have it in our power, at any time, to set aside the convention of 1848; and again he added, that France only waited our assent. I answered, that I was in no situation to advise, assent to, or dissent from, anything; that my mission was simply to get facts; but that I would call his attention to the closing part of Lord Clanricarde's letter, which, if I read it rightly, meant that, rather than have the one-sided convention of 1848 annulled, he would give us better terms. I also said that I thought, under the provisions of the 12th article, the United States had a right, as far as England was concerned, to insist on being parties to any arrangement, and had just ground of complaint if one were concluded without reference to their interests. I found, however, that he was firmly convinced that the interests both of France and the United States would be advanced by the proposed arrangement, and that we, not being parties to it, would be in a position to strike for more.

* * * * *

October 5, 1850.—* * * I have just returned from another interview with the chief of the bureau of foreign correspondence. * * * The first question I asked him was as to the present rates of postage between here and America. He answered: " $\frac{1}{4}$ oz., 1f. 50c.; $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., 3f.; $\frac{3}{4}$ oz., 4f. 50c.; 1 oz., 6f.; of which France takes one-third, and England two-thirds. This pays the letter to New York." Then I asked: "Suppose the letter is taken to New York in an American steamer: is it subject to a new sea-rate, or does England, in her turn, account to the United States?" To this he said he did not

know, but perhaps Mr. Thayer would be able to tell me. Then I asked how the postage would be under the proposed arrangement, [with England.] He answered: " $\frac{1}{4}$ oz., 1f. 30c.; $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., 2f. 60c.; $\frac{3}{4}$ oz., 3f. 90c.; 1 oz., 5f. 20c." "How would it then be with the American steamers?" "There will be such provision made that a letter going by an American steamer will be required to prepay only— $\frac{1}{4}$ oz., 80c.; $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., 1f. 60c.; $\frac{3}{4}$ oz., 2f. 40c.; 1 oz., 3f. 20c."

He spoke of two or three cases of imposition on the part of the British government. It seems that letters coming to France by American steamers prepay in America the postage to Liverpool, whereas those coming in English steamers prepay only the inland rate of America. Now, when these letters reach here, [Paris,] the rate charged by the English office is the same whether they are brought by English or American steamers. The result is, of course, that the English office gets a sea-rate, whether it actually does the transportation or not.

The mails for France, at New York, &c., by the Southampton steamers, are made up *in the English bag*. They used to be made up in a separate bag; but, he says, the English very shrewdly got instructions at Washington to have them made up as at present, and the result is, England gets a transit and a *sea-rate* on all such letters. M. Mourin suggests that this may be remedied by fresh instructions from Washington to make up the bag separately for France, and that France will take it directly from the steamer at Southampton, and, if England charges *any* postage, will discuss the question with her.

PARIS, October 8, 1850.

DEAR SIR: Finding Mr. Thayer still out of town when I called yesterday, I left a card, asking to be informed when I could see him. At 11 o'clock in the evening a note came, appointing 12 to-day for the interview.

Mr. Thayer began by stating, in strong terms, his wish to accept the proposition of England, and his regret at the delay. He says: "America negotiates a convention with England for the regulation of the postal correspondence, in the twelfth article of which, after making provision for the correspondence passing through England to and from countries beyond, an exception is made *in favor of France*, in consequence of the existing relations with that country. Provision is made for the conclusion at some subsequent time of a triple convention between the three powers. Things go on without any official steps being taken for carrying into effect that provision; and at length England, of her own accord, offers certain concessions to France with reference to such correspondence, without requiring any corresponding ones on her part, which France determines to accept. These concessions virtually do away with the distinctions made by the convention between French and other continental correspondence, and place all on the same footing—

which England, perhaps, would claim as an execution of the convention. Then America comes in, asks France not to accept, and becomes for the first time a party. * * * *

Now see the result. Had this been concluded, France and America would have been let at once into the benefits of it, and the latter would not have been bound by it, not being a party to it, but could still have insisted on the equitable execution of the convention of 1848, and threatened to annul it in case it was not done. Now, however, America, by asking France to delay, and by opening negotiations herself, has become a party, and, if France accepts, and England does not retract, America will be bound.” * * * *

This was an adroit move. I endeavored to answer as well as I could. As to the convention of 1848, I said I thought he had misapprehended its provisions. It provided that England and the United States should jointly ask France—which had never been done, because the two powers had been unable to agree on the basis of a proposition; but that the United States certainly never would agree that England had executed the twelfth article in good faith by placing the French on the same basis with the other continental correspondence. The convention contemplated more. It contemplated making France the depot for the continental correspondence of America, and England simply the channel to reach that depot; and it was for that that the United States had made the great and otherwise unaccountable concessions with reference to the Canada mails. I said it was very true that the pending negotiation was one between France and England; but at the same time the interference of America was by no means uncalled for. The convention was concluded on the 15th of December, 1848; the ratifications exchanged (I thought) on the 25th or 26th of January, 1849; and as early as the 16th of February following, official, but confidential, negotiations were opened between our legation at London and the French bureau, which were continued down to the time Mr. Bancroft left London. This state of things remained (if I was not mistaken) until the French government reopened negotiations by transmitting for your [Mr. Lawrence's] confidential perusal a copy of the letter to the British government accepting their proposal. Had France been the United States in such case, she would have interfered as the United States did, and her interference would have been justified by the position of the United States by the pending negotiations with France, and by the act of the French government in transmitting the copy of the letter. As to his next point, I told him the position of the United States towards the question was not altered. First, all communication with the French government was confidential; and, second, Mr. Lawrence's note to Lord Clanricarde had no reference to the negotiations between England and France. It only pointed to the execution of the convention of 1848. And if Lord Clanricarde chose to introduce the negotiations between his office and the French, the United States could not regard such extraneous matter. It was very difficult to perceive why the United States should be bound to accept a transit rate of one shilling because Mr. Lawrence had proposed one of six pence. * * *

* * * Mr. Sanford then asked whether, if

France should accept England's proposition, and England and the United States then agree on further modifications, France would make concessions corresponding to those of England. Mr. T. shrugged his shoulders, and said: "Probably, yes; but, when the time comes, France will examine and determine. The difference of a few pounds here or there ought not to determine a question of international postage. It should also be regulated with reference to the commercial wants of the nation."

* * * * *

Very truly, yours,

JOHN C. B. DAVIS.

—

K.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
138 *Piccadilly*, October 18, 1850.

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, has the honor of calling the attention of Viscount Palmerston, her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to that clause of the twelfth article of the postal convention between the United States and the United Kingdom concluded at London on the 15th day of December, 1848, by which "the contracting parties agree to invite France to enter into communication with them, without loss of time, in order to effect such arrangements for the conveyance of letters and newspapers and closed mails through the territories of the United States, of the United Kingdom, and of France, respectively, as may be most conducive to the interests of the three countries."

The undersigned has the honor to transmit herewith, for Viscount Palmerston's consideration, copies of a correspondence between the undersigned and the Postmaster General, by which Lord Palmerston will perceive that that officer has at length declined to negotiate on this subject, and has, in effect, after having entertained the question a year and a half, desired the undersigned to return to the usual channel of communication, from which his predecessor, as well as himself, had in this instance departed, with, as the undersigned has understood, the assent of the Foreign Office.

The undersigned has nothing to add to the arguments contained in the letter to Lord Clanricarde. The convention provides that Great Britain and the United States shall extend the invitation to France; and the undersigned, by his note, has only asked Great Britain to join in such invitation, and proposed an offer to be made to that government. He may, however, add, as Lord Clanricarde seems to have misapprehended him, that he alluded to the provisions of the convention, not with the wish of changing them, but to show that it would not have been concluded had the United States not entertained a just expectation that a liberal arrangement would be effected as to their continental correspondence.

The proposition made by Lord Clanricarde in reply is one to which

the United States cannot assent. It is not the one "the most conducive to the interests of the three countries." The undersigned is still of opinion that the rate proposed by him to Lord Clanricarde (which Lord Clanricarde seems to have misunderstood) is the most equitable, in view of the services performed, and the most conducive to the interests of the three countries, viz: that, adopting the convention of 1848 as the basis of the arrangement, and leaving the American inland and the sea-rate as settled by that, the English transit-rate be reduced to 6*d.* the ounce, and the French government be invited to join in a proportionate reduction, so that the entire rate from any port in France to any port in America via England should be 2*s.* 2*d.* per ounce. The undersigned therefore renews that proposition to Viscount Palmerston in an official form. But, if her Majesty's government are not of the same opinion, then the undersigned proposes to Lord Palmerston to join in the execution of the convention of 1848, and to invite France, "without loss of time," to enter into negotiations for the purposes set forth in the twelfth article.

The correspondence between the United States and the continent of Europe is already great, and is rapidly increasing; and, for reasons apparent to a liberal statesman, the United States would prefer concentrating it in England. It certainly would not contribute to the pleasure of the undersigned to be the means of transferring it elsewhere. A little money on one side or the other is of slight importance, compared with a just and equitable settlement.

This question has been pending so long that the undersigned is induced to press its attention upon Lord Palmerston, and to ask an early reply to this note.

The undersigned renews to Viscount Palmerston the assurance of his highest consideration.

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Viscount PALMERSTON, &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 91.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, December 6, 1850.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose a copy of a letter received this morning from the consul at Trieste, relative to the charges of postage upon letters that had been prepaid in the United States, which I forward to the department only as additional evidence touching the unjust charges and levies of postal rates by this government to which I had the honor to call the attention of the department in my despatch No. 83. As the letter was received only this morning, I have not yet had time to take any steps with reference to it.

* * * * *

Mr. Maxwell to Mr. Lawrence.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,
Trieste, November 28, 1850.

SIR: Having received two letters lately from the United States by the Collins steamers, upon which the postage to England had been *prepaid*, but which were nevertheless charged *full* postage here, viz: 55 carantani, I deemed it my duty to make inquiry at the post office for the reason of this charge. The reply given me was, that the letters were without a post-office stamp of payment, and that they were therefore obliged to charge the full postage from America. By the next post I received another letter with the *post-office* stamp of payment in the United States of 24 cents, (viz: 5 cents the inland postage to New York, and 19 cents the steamer postage,) and yet it was also charged 55 carantani. I therefore wrote a letter to the Post Office Direction, enclosing the envelope, and requested a written reply, to enable me to trace the error to its source, and have it rectified in future. I did so because I took it for granted that all corresponding with citizens of the United States would be treated in the same way, and it was therefore important to have this double payment prevented. I have just received the answer to my note, in which the postmaster states that the 55 carantani were charged on this letter because it came via "*France and Milan*," instead of "*Ostend and Vienna*," and that a letter from the United States to *Trieste*, *prepaid* to England, and sent by "*Ostend and Vienna*," is only subject to 29 carantani postage. To-day I received another letter, upon which there was no prepayment in the United States, but which was marked, as the last, "*by Ostend*." It was, however, sent from England to *Calais*, and has been four days longer on the way than the other letters which came by the same steamer, and were forwarded "*by Ostend*." This letter, however, is also charged 55 carantani—showing that the Post Office Direction were in error in their reply to my note. The privilege of being allowed to make part prepayment of letters in the United States is an excellent arrangement, the correspondent in Europe being thus relieved from bearing the whole cost of postage both ways, as was formerly the case. To make the arrangement, however, effective, it is evident that it will be necessary for the Post Office Department in England to put some *known stamp* upon the letters to shew *here* that the postage has been *paid that far*. I have deemed this a matter of sufficient importance to be brought to your notice, not on account of the trifling loss and inconvenience to myself, but because I am satisfied that the course pursued as to my letters is pursued as to all others; and it is then a matter of national interest, to which I hope you will deem it proper to call the attention of the Post Office Department of Great Britain. At the same time, it will be doing a great service to the American correspondents here if the distributing post-office agents can be induced to comply with the *request endorsed* on the letters which come from the United States, and send them "*by Ostend*," and not by France and Italy, as in the latter case they are always from *two to four days* later in reaching here. I send you three envelopes, in which were only *single* letters: No. 1 contained a letter from Philadelphia, upon which 21 cents were *paid* there, and yet it was charged here 55 caran-

tani, making the whole postage on a single sheet of letter paper about 60 cents; No. 2 contained a letter from Easton, Pennsylvania, upon which 24 cents were *prepaid*, and the letter marked "by Ostend." It was sent, however, "*by Calais*," and came to hand here four days later in consequence.

I trust that the motives which prompt me in this matter will be deemed a sufficient excuse for this intrusion upon your valuable time.

I have the honor to be, with high regard, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. D. MAXWELL,
U. S. Consul at Trieste.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 99.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, February 7, 1851.

SIR: * * * * On the 3d instant I addressed to Lord Palmerston another note, of which a copy is enclosed, on the subject of the postal relations with France, urging a reply to my note of the 18th of October. Her Majesty's government do not show the proper willingness to carry into effect the postal convention of December, 1848, in the spirit in which it was conceived. I learn, indirectly, that, by an arrangement between the French and English governments, our closed mails for Havre via Southampton are to be exempted from the claim for postage by this government. You will remember that I alluded to this tax in my despatch No. 83. If my information is correct, one very just cause of complaint is removed.

Mr. Lawrence to Viscount Palmerston.

138 PICCADILLY, *February 3, 1851.*

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, has the honor again to call the attention of Viscount Palmerston, her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to so much of the twelfth article of the postal convention between the United States of America and her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom concluded at London on the 15th day of December, 1848, as relates to extending an invitation to France to enter into a postal arrangement with the contracting parties. The undersigned had the honor, on the 18th day of October last, to address a communication on this subject to Lord Palmerston, containing a proposition on behalf the United States, to which he has received no reply. For reasons set forth in that note and in its enclosure, the undersigned again invites the attention of her Majesty's government to the

subject, and asks, in justice to the United States, who suffer by delay, an early reply.

The undersigned renews to Lord Palmerston the assurance of his most distinguished consideration.

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 102.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, February 21, 1851.

SIR: * * * * I have the honor, also, to enclose a note from Lord Palmerston, acquainting me that the Treasury is in communication with the Post Office relative to the postal arrangement with France.

* * * * *

Lord Palmerston to Mr. Lawrence.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *February 19, 1851.*

The undersigned, her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honor to acquaint Mr. Lawrence, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, in reply to his note of the 3d instant, that he has been informed by the Lords Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury that their lordships are now in communication with her Majesty's Postmaster General respecting the arrangements to be made with France agreeably to the twelfth article of the letter-post convention between this country and the United States of the 13th of December, 1848, which relates to the transmission through the territories of Great Britain of mails passing between France and the United States.

The undersigned has the honor to renew to Mr. Lawrence the assurance of his highest consideration.

PALMERSTON.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 104.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, February 26, 1851.

SIR: * * * * *

I have the honor to enclose copies of a correspondence between the French Postmaster General and myself relative to the proposed postal

convention between France, England, and the United States. In this connexion, I cannot forbear expressing the hope that I may receive further instructions on this subject.

* * * * *

Mr. Thayer to Mr. Lawrence.

[Translation.]

PARIS, *February 22, 1851.*

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE: Subsequently to the journey which Mr. Davis, secretary to the legation of the United States in London, made to Paris in September last, your excellency was pleased to announce to me that you were going to take fresh steps with Lord Palmerston, in order to secure, in so far as concerns the Franco-American correspondence, the fulfilment of the 12th article of the convention of December 15, 1848, between the United States and England, and that you would communicate to me the results of those proceedings.

In the hope that this communication would reach me from day to day, I have deferred until now to notify the British office of the adherence of my department to the proposition made by said office to fix the rate of English postage to which all letters passing between France and the United States by way of England are liable to 1s. upon letters forwarded by American steamers.

However little advantageous this proposition may be, its adoption would, nevertheless, have the effect, as your excellency is aware, of reducing the rate of postage which my department pays at this moment to the British office, and consequently to lower the tax imposed upon the parties forwarding or receiving letters passing between France and the United States. This reduction of the rates of postage would affect especially those letters that are forwarded by American steamers which now pay sea-postage twice—which is to say, once to the United States, and once again to France.

Your excellency will, no doubt, be of the same opinion as myself, that this state of things cannot last longer; and that it is necessary at last to put an end to the just complaints which are being raised in France in consequence of the tax which is imposed upon letters forwarded by American mail steamers.

I take the liberty, therefore, to beg that your excellency will have the kindness to inform me of the results of the steps you have taken with Lord Palmerston. In case those steps should have been fruitless, my department would be under the necessity of immediately adhering to the propositions of the British office, in order no longer to deprive the public of the advantages it would derive from the adoption of those propositions.

Be pleased to accept, sir, the assurance of my high consideration.
The Postmaster General:

E. T. THAYER.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Thayer.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
London, February 25, 1851.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22d instant on the subject of the execution of the 12th article of the postal convention between Great Britain and the United States, and regret that I am not able to give you the views of the British government with reference to it.

You will doubtless remember that, on the 14th of October last, I acquainted you that I was about visiting Lord Palmerston, at his country seat, "for the purpose, in part, of discussing this question;" and, further, that I should address his lordship on the subject. Accordingly, on the 18th of October, I did address to him a note, enclosing a copy of the correspondence with Lord Clanricarde, and inviting her Majesty's government to extend the contemplated invitation to France, on the basis I had previously, in that correspondence, submitted to the Post Office Department. I then, in a personal interview with Lord Palmerston, at Broadlands, urged upon him the importance of giving this an early consideration. Not having received any reply, I again, on the 3d of February, invited the attention of her Majesty's government to my former note, and asked, "in justice to the United States, who suffer by delay, an early reply." On the 19th, I received a note from Lord Palmerston, informing me that the Commissioners of the Treasury were in communication with the Post Office Department on the subject. This led me to anticipate an early reply, but the late changes in the cabinet may defer it yet longer. It has been, and is now, my purpose, immediately on the receipt of this reply, to acquaint you with its tenor. I can assure you I am quite as anxious to receive it as the French government can be; and, should the present ministerial crisis result in a change in the Foreign Office, I shall make it one of my earliest duties to call the attention of the new Secretary to this question, which has been already too long delayed through the neglect of this government.

I pray you, sir, to accept the assurances of the high consideration with which I have the honor to be your most obedient servant,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 117.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, May 22, 1851.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose copies of a further correspondence relative to the execution of the 12th article of the postal convention of December, 1848, between the United States and the United Kingdom. This correspondence consists of (1) a note from Lord Palmerston proposing, as the basis of a postal convention between Great Britain, France, and the United States, that the British office should receive 2s. 8d. per ounce when letters are carried across the Atlantic in British packets, and 1s. when carried in American packets; (2) my acknowl-

edgment of the receipt of this note; (3) a note from the French Postmaster General to me, acquainting me that he had accepted the offer of the British government to make an *ex parte* arrangement, which offer was made in a note from Colonel Maberly, marked A, enclosed in my despatch No. 83, and enclosing correspondence relative to this, of which I send copies, marked 3 B, C, &c. The letter from Mr. Thayer to the British government accepting their proposition would have been sent, had it been necessary; but you will find a draught of this letter, marked D, enclosed in my despatch No. 83. A few verbal and unimportant alterations were made in the letter as finally sent, and the part about the Southampton and Havre steamers was struck out. The enclosure marked 4 is a copy of my answer to Mr. Thayer.

The department are in possession of my views on this subject. I have seen no reason to change them in the slightest degree. The present proposition is not the liberal one which the United States had the right to look for.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Lord Palmerston to Mr. Lawrence.

[1.]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1851.

The undersigned, her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honor to inform Mr. Abbott Lawrence, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America at this court, that he has received from the General Post Office a letter which enables him to reply to Mr. Lawrence's note of the 18th of October last respecting the 12th article of the letter-post convention between Great Britain and the United States of the 15th of December, 1848, which relates to the arrangements to be made between the governments of Great Britain, France, and the United States for the conveyance of letters and newspapers and of closed mails through the territories of those countries.

The undersigned begs leave to state that the Postmaster General has been authorized to conclude an arrangement upon this subject with the United States and with France upon the following terms, namely: that the British post office should receive upon the correspondence passing between France and the United States through the United Kingdom two shillings and eight pence per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by British packets, and one shilling per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by United States packets.

It appears, from communications which have passed between the Director General of the French post office and her Majesty's Postmaster General upon this matter, that the French government will be ready to agree to the rates above proposed, and, if the United States government should acquiesce therein, a formal convention to that effect can be concluded between Great Britain, France, and the United States.

The undersigned has the honor to renew to Mr. Lawrence the assurance of his highest consideration.

PALMERSTON.

Mr. Lawrence to Lord Palmerston.

[2.]

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
138 Piccadilly, May 22, 1851.

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the note of Viscount Palmerston, her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, of the 9th instant, proposing to the United States to conclude a postal arrangement with the United Kingdom and with France upon the following terms, namely: that the British post office should receive upon the correspondence passing between France and the United States through the United Kingdom two shillings and eight pence per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by British packets, and one shilling per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by United States packets.

This proposition is identical with the one which Mr. Bancroft two years, and the undersigned nearly one year, since declined, when made by the Postmaster General; and the undersigned had then the honor of pointing out to that officer, and subsequently to Lord Palmerston, the reasons why such an arrangement would neither be just to the United States nor "most conducive to the interests of the three countries."

The undersigned will have the honor to transmit a copy of Lord Palmerston's note to his government.

The undersigned renews to Viscount Palmerston the assurance of his highest consideration.

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Thayer to Mr. Lawrence.

[Translation.]

[3.]

PARIS, May 12, 1851.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE: The new steps which your excellency announced to me in your letter of the 25th of last February as having been taken in order to obtain from the British government the application of the twelfth article of the convention of December 15, 1848, between the United States and England, to the correspondence passing between France and the United States, not having, to all appearance, produced any results by the end of March, it became my duty to explain the state of things to my government, and to ask for instructions in regard to the reply to be given to the propositions of the British office, of

which I had the honor to inform your excellency in my letter of February 22, 1851. Agreeably to the invitation which had been addressed to me on the subject, I wrote, on the 1st of last April, to Colonel Maberly, Assistant Postmaster General, to inform him that I had been authorized to accept the offers of his department, and to beg that he would therefore have the kindness to direct that the necessary measures be adopted in order that the French department might forward and receive in closed mails, from the 1st of May following, the correspondence between France and the United States forwarded both by American and British mail steamers through England.

At first, the British department expressed a fear that the establishment of closed mails could not go into effect by the time which had been indicated, its object being to examine first of all my remarks in regard to the raising of the rates of transit demanded by the same. Having, however, insisted that the new arrangements should be carried out without delay, the British office caused me to be informed that it would be able to forward, beginning with the 1st instant, the correspondence and newspapers passing in closed mails between France and the United States, with this understanding, that the amount to be paid to said office for forwarding such correspondence would be fixed when the English government had come to an agreement with your excellency.

Consequently, since the 1st of this month, the French offices have forwarded by way of Liverpool, in closed mails, addressed to the offices of Boston and New York, the correspondence destined for the United States which the parties forwarding desire to be sent by that route. With regard to the return correspondence from the United States arriving in open bags by way of Liverpool, it has been agreed upon with the English office that such correspondence shall be temporarily made up in closed parcels, under the care of the British agents.

These explanations, which I deem it my duty to send you, Monsieur le Ministre, will, no doubt, prompt your excellency to inquire whether it would not be proper to invite the Boston and New York offices to forward on their part, in closed mails, by way of Liverpool, the letters and newspapers destined for France which are now delivered in open bags to the British office by the same route.

I enclose herewith a copy of the correspondence which has passed between the Post Office Department and the British office under the circumstances.

I beg your excellency to accept the assurance of my high consideration.

The Postmaster General:

E. T. THAYER.

Mr. Maberly to Mr. Thayer.

[3 B.]

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

London, April 9, 1851.

SIR: I am commanded by the Postmaster General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st instant, replying to the letter ad-

dressed to you by direction of the Lords of her Majesty's Treasury on the 3d of October, 1849, offering a reduction of the British transit postage chargeable upon letters between France and the United States forwarded through the United Kingdom.

The Postmaster General desires me to state that this matter shall receive his early attention; but his lordship fears it will not be possible to conclude the negotiation on this subject in time to bring the reduction into operation on the 1st of May next, although no time shall be lost on the part of this office.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient, humble servant,

MABERLY.

Mr. Thayer to Mr. Mabery.

[Translation.]

[3 C.]

PARIS, April 15, 1851.

SIR: You did me the honor of writing to me, on the 9th instant, to acknowledge the receipt of my letter of the 1st of the same month, (No. 3781.)

You inform me that the Postmaster General has desired you to state that my suggestions will receive his earliest attention, but that his lordship fears that it will not be possible for him to arrive at any conclusion in the matter in time to carry out the new arrangements for securing the transport of the correspondence passing between France and the United States by way of England on the first of May. I am happy, sir, at the earnestness you have evinced in answering me. Allow me to beg that you will tender to his lordship my best thanks for the care he has been pleased to bestow upon this matter. I cannot but augur favorably from this kind attention. I must, however, add that, as the actual state of the postal relations between France and the United States by way of England are giving rise to just and universal complaints on the part of the public, it would be expedient, in case, as his lordship fears, the examination of my suggestions could not be concluded between this and the end of the month, to apply, at all events, from the first of May next, the conditions of transit proposed in your letter of October 3, 1849, liable to be modified, eventually, in case the suggestions contained in my letter of April 1 should be received as well founded.

As the only question for the British office, then, would be to execute a measure already approved by the Lords of the Treasury, I do not think that there can be any obstacle in adopting my proposition. In the meanwhile, and until the British office shall have arrived at a definite conclusion in regard to the suggestions which I thought it my duty to submit to it, the transmission of the correspondence in question might be regulated in the following manner:

The French post office to make up the correspondence for the Boston and New York offices in closed mails, a statement of the contents thereof to be furnished to your department in the regular form.

With regard to the return correspondence from the United States,

until arrangements shall have been made with the American department for having the same forwarded in closed mails to France, it should be made up under the care of the British offices, in separate parcels, addressed to the offices of Calais and Paris, marked according to the place whence such correspondence was forwarded and the route by which it has been carried. The process of marking, as above stated, might be after the following fashion: *United States mail per English steamer*, or *United States mail per American steamer*, according as the case might be. The closed mails should bear a two-fold inscription, to be entered in the letter-bill, specifying the nationality of the vessel carrying said correspondence, leaving the amount to be paid by your department for such transportation to be determined according to the weight of the letters and the number of newspapers forwarded in this way, conformably to the conditions agreed upon.

I shall be greatly obliged to you, sir, if you will have the kindness to inform me whether I may give instructions to this effect to the agents of my department.

—

Mr. Maberly to Mr. Thayer.

[3 D.]

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
London, April 26, 1851.

SIR: In reply to your letter of the 15th instant, I have the honor to inform you that the Postmaster General has much pleasure in acceding to your request that the correspondence from France for the United States should at once be made up in closed mails, instead of being sent to this country with the ordinary transit correspondence, upon the understanding that a statement of the contents of these closed mails is furnished to this department by the French post office in the regular form.

With regard to the return correspondence from the United States to France, you suggest that, until received in closed mails from America, it shall be made up at this office in separate parcels, marked according as the letters have arrived by British or by United States packets, and entered in like manner in the letter-bill. This course appears to the Postmaster General unobjectionable, and orders will be given for carrying it into effect, so far as this department is concerned, leaving the amount which eventually is to be paid to this country by France to be governed by the decision of the Lords of her Majesty's Treasury, to whom your letter of the 1st instant has been submitted.

I beg leave to add, that any delay which may take place in concluding this matter is not owing to any difficulty anticipated, but to the necessity for the American minister being a party to the arrangement.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient, humble servant,

MABERLY.

Mr. Thayer to Mr. Maberly.

[Translation.]

[3 E.]

PARIS, May 3, 1851.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th of last April, in which you kindly apprise me of the measures which his lordship the Postmaster General has adopted in order to secure, beginning with the 1st of the present month of May, the transportation in closed mails of the correspondence passing between France and the United States by way of Liverpool, both per British and American steamers.

I beg, sir, that you will accept my thanks for the eagerness you have manifested in communicating to me the decision of your department. The intention of the British government, as signified, to fix the amount which my department would have to pay to your office under the circumstances, after having come to an understanding with the American government, can only make me anticipate a decision favorable to the development of the postal relations between France and the United States by way of England.

Please to accept, &c.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Thayer.

[4.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, May 22, 1851.

SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant, acquainting me with the arrangement between the British and French post offices relative to mails between France and the United States.

You are, sir, already so fully in possession of my views on this subject, that it is unnecessary for me to say more than that I shall have the honor to transmit copies of your letter and its enclosures to my government by the steamer of the 24th.

Accept, sir, the assurances of the distinguished consideration with which I have the honor to be your most obedient, humble servant,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Hall to Mr. Webster.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

Washington, June 21, 1851.

SIR: Mr. Lawrence's despatch of the 22d ultimo, placed by you in my hands, has been carefully examined; and I have no hesitation in stating it as my deliberate opinion that, in declining to join in the proposed arrangement for a closed mail between the United States and France via Great Britain at a transit-rate of twenty-four cents an

ounce, he has acted judiciously, and that he is entirely correct in the observation that "such an arrangement would neither be just to the United States nor most conducive to the interests of the three countries."

The proposition, as stated in full, it seems, was as follows, viz: that the British post office should receive upon the correspondence passing between France and the United States through the United Kingdom two shillings and eight pence (equal to about sixty-four cents) per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by British packets, and one shilling (about twenty-four cents) per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by United States packets. The British sea-rate, therefore, was to be forty cents the ounce, being equivalent to two single rates of sixteen cents the half ounce, with the addition of twenty-five per cent.; and this left the actual transit-rate through England at twenty-four cents the ounce, or twelve cents the single letter of half an ounce.

With you I need go into no extended remarks to show how unjust would be the operation of such an arrangement, so far as the United States are concerned. I was on the point, however, before this communication came to hand, of addressing you in respect to the high transit-rates of postage on mails passing through the United Kingdom to and from the continent of Europe and the United States, respectively; and I embrace the earliest moment of carrying out this intention.

It is not alone with France that improved facilities of communication are desired. Prussia, Germany, and Austria especially, would, with the United States, be greatly benefited by a more liberal policy in this respect on the part of the British government; nor would the latter suffer by the adoption of such a policy. Experience has shown that an exorbitant postage tax is a sure means of prohibiting, to a great extent, correspondence by mail, and consequently of restricting the income to the government from that source, besides withholding from the people the accommodation which, in this age, so remarkable for activity and enterprise in all important pursuits, they demand and have a right to expect.

Aside from the fact that, under the postal convention of 15th December, 1848, with Great Britain, the United States transit charge is *but twelve and a half cents an ounce* on letters passing in closed mails between the United Kingdom and the British North American provinces through the United States, and that under said treaty letters to and from that kingdom are transmitted to and from the remotest parts of the United States (Oregon and California excepted) at five cents the single rate, where our own citizens are charged ten cents, we have now additional reasons to urge why the British transit-rates on our mails should be reduced, namely: that by the law of the late session of Congress, as it has been construed, the postage on all letters between the United Kingdom and Oregon or California is, on and after 1st July next, to be reduced from *fifty-nine* to *twenty-nine* cents the single rate; and the United States charge, under the old law, for the British closed mails which are conveyed direct from England via Panama to San Francisco will also be reduced from seventy-five cents to fifty cents per ounce—being in the first instance a reduction of over *fifty per cent.*,

and in the latter *thirty-three and one-third per cent.*, on the present price. These, certainly, are considerations which should not be overlooked.

Furthermore, if the British post office shall be permitted, under the new law, still to despatch closed mails to and from San Francisco via New York on the basis of two rates to the ounce, with the addition of twenty-five per cent., it will be perceived that, as the United States single rate between New York and San Francisco is to come down from forty to ten cents, the price of such closed mail will, in a like degree, be lowered from one dollar (the present rate) to twenty-five cents per ounce—a reduction of just *seventy-five per cent.* Whether or not it will be deemed advisable to grant this latter privilege of a closed mail at the reduced rate suggested, remains to be considered. Of course, there is nothing in the treaty stipulations requiring it of us, since California is one of the United States, and foreign countries and British colonies or possessions are the only places to and from which the treaty provides that the British office may send closed mails in transit through the United States.

I beg leave to refer to another consideration, which should, in my judgment, have much weight in inducing the British government to take favorable action in this matter. By the German-Austrian postal convention which went into operation on the first of July, 1850, it is understood the rates of postage throughout Prussia, Austria, and indeed in most, if not all, the States of Germany, have been greatly reduced; and it is represented that the high transit postage through England is the only obstacle in the way of rendering that convention available to all parties concerned in the large correspondence and business transactions between the United States and those countries.

Articles of agreement between this department and the post office of Prussia have been prepared, providing for the reciprocal receipt and delivery of letters and packets in closed mails between the United States and Prussia, to be conveyed through England; but their final execution has been postponed for several months, in the confident hope and expectation that the British government would finally yield to the reasonable demands of the contracting parties for a reduction in their transit postage, and thus facilitate the communication so much desired on either side.

In view of these considerations, and of the fact, also, that the United States rates of postage on letters and newspapers by American ships to the continent of Europe are to be considerably reduced after first July—not to mention other facts and circumstances bearing upon this matter,—it is still believed that the British government will see the propriety of permitting the transit of mails through England at rates much below those now established for such correspondence.

Mr. Lawrence has the subject before him, and I trust he will pursue it with characteristic energy until the end in view shall be accomplished.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
N. K. HALL,
Postmaster General.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 126.]

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
London, August 8, 1851.

SIR: I have given to your despatch No. 58, and the letter from the Postmaster General to yourself enclosed in it, the earliest attention in my power; and I have now the honor to enclose a copy of a note I have this day addressed to Lord Palmerston, again calling upon the British government to carry out the provisions of the 12th article of the postal convention of December 15, 1848, and to that end renewing the proposition contained in my letter of the 18th October, 1850, to Lord Palmerston, a copy of which was enclosed in my despatch No. 83. This proposition, you will observe by looking at Lord Palmerston's note of May 9, of which a copy was enclosed in my despatch No. 117, has not been distinctly declined by the British government; and it seems to me to be no more than the United States have a right to ask for. I think it would be pressed with more certainty of success if the department would determine that, in the event of its not being acceded to, the United States would give the notice to annul the convention. As that instrument operates at present, the advantages are all on the side of Great Britain. She shares with us all the advantages in the increased facilities in the direct correspondence; and, while she has her Canada mails transported across our territory at the rate of 12½ cents the ounce, she receives for taking United States letters from Liverpool to France 40 cents per ounce, or thereabouts. I am not able to state the precise sum, being ignorant of the division made between England and France.

I am sorry not to have received earlier instructions on this subject. Parliament has just been prorogued to-day, and it will be very difficult to get any business attended to for two or three months to come.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Lawrence to Lord Palmerston.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
August 8, 1851.

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, has the honor to acquaint Viscount Palmerston, her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that he has communicated to his government the note of Viscount Palmerston of the 9th day of May last, relative to the 12th article of the letter-post convention between Great Britain and the United States of the 15th December, 1848, and stating that the Postmaster General had been authorized to conclude an arrangement with the United States and with France for the conveyance of letters and of newspapers and of closed mails through the territories of those countries upon the following terms, viz: that the British post office should receive upon the correspondence passing between France and the United States through the United Kingdom two shillings and eight pence

per ounce when the letters should be conveyed across the Atlantic by British packets, and one shilling when the letters should be conveyed across the Atlantic by United States packets; and the undersigned is instructed to say that the government of the United States decline joining in such an arrangement.

On the 19th of August last, in a letter to Lord Clanricarde, and on the 18th of October last, in a letter to Lord Palmerston, enclosing a copy of the letter to Lord Clanricarde, the undersigned had the honor to lay before her Majesty's government certain reasons why a different arrangement should be made, which reasons have been approved by the government of the United States, and may be briefly summed up as follows:

The basis fixed for the proposed arrangement is the one "the most conducive to the interests of the three countries." The proposition submitted by her Majesty's government is not of such a character.

By the convention of 1848, the United States grant to the United Kingdom the transit in closed mails through the United States of letters and newspapers forwarded from the United Kingdom, its colonies or possessions, to any other British colony or possessions, or to any foreign country, &c., &c., at two rates of two pence half-penny each to the ounce, with the addition of twenty-five per cent. on the amount of postage, to compensate for loss which would be otherwise sustained by this mode of computation. As the distance from New York or Boston to Canada is greater, and the means of communication as difficult as from Liverpool to France, the United States government think that the British government ought not to claim more than this sum for the transit across England, and look upon it as the estimate of her Majesty's government of the value of such services.

That convention aims to place the postal communications between the two countries upon "a more liberal and advantageous footing." So far as the direct correspondence, or the British correspondence, passing in closed bags across the territory of the United States was concerned, that was done. But the correspondence between the United States and the continent of Europe, owing to certain intervening treaties, could not then be placed on such a footing. In lieu thereof, the parties agreed to take steps, without loss of time, to place it so, indicating their mutual views as to the rates by which it should be governed.

And, in view of the undertaking on the part of her Majesty's government to complete an arrangement for the correspondence between France and the United States, without loss of time, the United States undertook not only to transport the Canada mails at the rates indicated above, but also letters to and from the remotest parts of the United States, (California and Oregon excepted,) for 5 cents, when the citizens of the United States were charged 10 cents.

The undersigned had also the honor, in those communications, to call the attention of her Majesty's government to the desire of the United States to make England the focus for their continental correspondence; to the benefits that would accrue to the United Kingdom from such an arrangement; to the regret which the undersigned would feel at being obliged to advise such a concentration elsewhere, if the present system were not speedily changed, and a more liberal one substituted than her

Majesty's government have yet shown a willingness to agree to ; and still more generally to the impolicy of fixing postage rates at such an amount as to check correspondence, and thereby diminish revenue.

These various considerations have met the approbation of the government of the United States. The undersigned is instructed to present to her Majesty's government, in addition, the fact that, by the present postal laws of the Union, (enacted at the last session of Congress,) the postage on all letters between the United Kingdom and Oregon or California was reduced, on the 1st of July last, from 59 to 29 cents the single rate ; and the United States charge under the old law for the conveyance of English closed mails via Panama to San Francisco was reduced from 75 cents to 50 cents per ounce. Furthermore, if the British post office shall be permitted, under the new law, to despatch closed mails to and from San Francisco via New York on the basis of two rates to the ounce, with the addition of 25 per cent., as the United States single rate between New York and San Francisco is to come down from 40 to 10 cents, the price of such closed mail will, in like degree, be lowered from one dollar to 25 cents. Whether it will be deemed advisable to grant this latter privilege of a closed mail at the reduced rate suggested, remains to be considered by the department at Washington, there being nothing in the convention requiring it.

The undersigned is also instructed to say that, by the German-Austrian convention which went into operation on the first of July, 1850, it is understood that the rates of postage throughout Prussia, Austria, and indeed in most, if not all, the States of Germany, have been greatly reduced, and that it is represented that the high transit-rate through England is the only obstacle in the way of rendering that convention available to parties corresponding between the United States and those countries. The United States have delayed making arrangements for that purpose with Prussia, under the confident hope that the British government would finally yield to their reasonable demand for a reduction in transit postage, and thus facilitate the communication so much desired on either side.

The government of the United States, in view of these considerations, and of the fact also that the United States rates of postage on letters and newspapers by American ships to the continent of Europe were materially reduced the first of July last, can see no reason to abandon the proposition made by the undersigned to Lord Palmerston in the note of the 18th of October last.

The undersigned has accordingly again the honor to propose to Viscount Palmerston that an arrangement for the conveyance of letters and newspapers and closed mails to and from France and the United States via England be concluded between Great Britain, France, and the United States, (if France consents,) upon the following terms, viz: that the British post office should receive upon the correspondence passing between France and the United States through the United Kingdom two shillings and two pence per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by British packets, and six pence per ounce when the letters shall be conveyed across the Atlantic by United States packets.

Nearly three years having now elapsed since the convention of 1848

was signed, the undersigned expresses the wish that this subject may receive an early consideration from her Majesty's government.

The undersigned has the honor to renew to Viscount Palmerston the assurances of his highest consideration.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract]

[No. 127.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, August 15, 1851.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose a copy of a note to Lord Palmerston on the subject of the detention of letters from France to America passing through England, and intended for the United States steam-packets; and of the letters from Mr. William Brown, M. P., and from Mr. Riggs, which called it out.

* * * * *

Mr. Lawrence to Lord Palmerston.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,
138 Piccadilly, August 12, 1851.

MY LORD: I learn from reliable sources that letters sent from France to the United States via England with invoices, and intended to accompany goods shipped by the United States packets commonly known as the Collins line, are not sent by the ships carrying the goods, but are detained somewhere until the next following British or Cunard packet; in consequence of which, the goods, on arrival at New York, are necessarily sent to the public stores, and there detained, at expense, until the arrival of the invoices. As this injures the commerce of the United States, injures also the United States mail packets, diminishes the revenues of the Post Office Department of the United States, and (if happening through the fault of British authorities) violates the spirit of the convention regulating the postal relations between the United Kingdom and the United States, I have the honor to ask your lordship to cause immediate inquiry to be made, to determine whether such letters are detained by the British authorities, and, if it is found that they are so detained, to cause such regulations to be made as to prevent a like detention in future.

I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, your lordship's most obedient, humble servant,

ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Brown to Mr. Lawrence.

FENTON'S HOTEL, August 9, 1851.

SIR: I have sent to Sir Charles Wood, as well as to Lord Palmerston, exact copies of the letters I sent you, and enlarged a little more to Sir Charles. It may draw from him some inquiries. I should therefore like to have the facts accurately as to what your government have done since the treaty; what they contemplate doing in the way of further reduction; also, what concessions and reciprocities have been granted by other governments: for, if it can be shown, through the press, that we seek no more than we are fairly entitled to, it will have its weight; and it would not be the first time I have used that weapon successfully.

Yours, very truly and respectfully,

WILLIAM BROWN.

Mr. Riggs to Mr. Brown.

PARIS, August 8, 1851.

SIR: I have had a conversation this morning with the agents of our steamers, Mr. Draper, and Munro & Co., and have learned from them the impositions practised by the post offices either in London, Liverpool, or Paris on all letters intended to go by Collins's line of steamers, with the goods shipped by them. The goods have gone forward, and the letters, with invoices, &c., have been detained, and have been sent by the next steamer—the Cunard line. When the goods have arrived in New York, they have been necessarily sent to the public store, on expenses, until the arrival of the invoices. As Mr. Rives has gone to London to see Mr. Lawrence, would it not be of importance for you to see them on this subject, as well as on the shameful imposition on all letters coming through England to France, &c., where the excess of charge on letters from London to Paris is double the postage by the steamers from New York to Liverpool?

I learn from Mr. Sanford, secretary of legation, that he had conversed with the Postmaster General of Paris, who says he is willing and ready to correct this evil, if Great Britain will. If it cannot be otherwise accomplished, notice should be given by our government that the treaty will be broken, after the usual notice.

Will you bring this matter before our minister and the British government in time to save trouble and ill-will? I will have the documents and facts sent to our government at Washington, when I have no doubt it will be promptly attended to. Our merchants and others are now awakened upon this extraordinary subject. It appears to me that Great Britain should be the last government to tax commerce and manufactures unnecessarily. If they persist in exacting such postages and preferences, it will be destruction to the interest of our steamers, as the goods and correspondence will go by other routes, to our injury.

Hoping you will let the subject have your early attention, I remain, &c., &c.,

E. RIGGS.

Mr. Davis to Mr. Webster.

[No. 9.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, September 23, 1851.

SIR: With reference to Mr. Lawrence's despatch No. 127, relative to the detention of certain letters from France to the United States, I have the honor, in Mr. Lawrence's absence, to enclose to you a copy of Lord Palmerston's reply, and to be, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. C. B. DAVIS.

Lord Palmerston to Mr. Lawrence.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *September 20, 1851.*

SIR: With reference to my letter of the 3d instant, I have the honor to state to you that I have received an answer from her Majesty's Postmaster General to my inquiry as to the delay attending the transmission through this country to the United States of some letters containing invoices which you stated had been posted in France, and had not been forwarded to the United States along with the goods to which those invoices related.

The Postmaster General has informed me that, by an arrangement concluded some time ago between him and the Director General of the French post office, the French post office has, since the 2d of May last, made up all its correspondence for the United States in *closed mails*, which have invariably been forwarded from this country by the particular route or packet specified in the address written upon them; and the Postmaster General thinks it possible that some letters intended by the writers to have been despatched by one of the United States packets may have been put into one of these French closed mails, which was directed to be forwarded by a British packet; but, if this has occurred, the error is attributable to the French, and not to the English post office, as the mails in question are despatched through this country to the United States unopened.

I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

PALMERSTON.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 134.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, October 24, 1851.

SIR: On the 8th of August last, in my despatch No. 126, I had the honor to transmit a copy of a note to Lord Palmerston on the subject of the execution of the 12th article of the letter-post convention between the United States and Great Britain of the 15th December, 1848. In

that note, in addition to the reasons set forth in my note of the 18th October, 1850, to Lord Palmerston, and in my letters and verbal communications to Lord Clanricarde, I spoke, under instructions from the Postmaster General, of the altered state of our postal arrangements since July 1, 1851, in favor of the United Kingdom, and of the late reduction in the German rates, of the benefit of which the United States is deprived in consequence of the high rate for transit through England; and I concluded by renewing the proposition made in my note of the 18th October. I have now the honor to enclose a copy of Lord Palmerston's reply, declining the proposition.

I cannot but think that, on an examination of the provisions of the postal convention of December, 1848, and of the correspondence on this subject transmitted to the department both by my predecessor and myself, the government will agree with me that the proposition now declined is just—is what we ought to demand, if we intend to preserve anything like reciprocity in our postal arrangements with the United Kingdom—and ought to have been accepted by the government. I therefore most reluctantly, and with entire deference to the better judgment of the President, request to be instructed at once to give the requisite notice to annul the convention of December 15, 1848.

Our continental correspondence, already very great, is daily increasing by the continued emigration from Germany and other continental States. The correspondence between the United States and the United Kingdom, also, particularly with Ireland, has become of vast importance to the citizens of the United States, and is likely to go on increasing for many years to come. In view of these facts, I respectfully suggest that it would be expedient and just to effect a large reduction in the ocean postage between the two countries.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Lord Palmerston to Mr. Lawrence.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *October 14, 1851.*

The undersigned, her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honor to inform Mr. Lawrence, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America at this court, that her Majesty's government have had under their consideration the note which Mr. Lawrence addressed to the undersigned on the 8th of August last with reference to the arrangement to be made under the 12th article of the letter-post convention of the 15th of December, 1848, between Great Britain and the United States, in regard to the rates chargeable in Great Britain on correspondence passing through Great Britain between France and the United States.

In that note Mr. Lawrence declined, on the part of the United States government, to accept the proposal of her Majesty's government that the British post office should receive on such correspondence 2s. 8d. an ounce when it should be brought from the United States to England in British packets, and 1s. an ounce when it should be brought to Eng-

land by United States packets; and Mr. Lawrence proposed, instead, that the post-office rates should be reduced in the first-mentioned case to 2s. 2d., and in the latter case to 6d.

The undersigned has now the honor to inform Mr. Lawrence that her Majesty's government regret that they cannot accept the proposal made by Mr. Lawrence in his note of the 8th of August last, because it appears to her Majesty's government that the rate of two shillings and two pence an ounce for the mails conveyed by British packets, and the transit-rate of sixpence an ounce for those conveyed by United States packets, would not be a fair equivalent, with reference to the expenses incurred by her Majesty's government, for the conveyance of those mails across England to France.

Her Majesty's government conceive that the rates of postage proposed in the note of the undersigned of the 9th May, 1851, are fair and reasonable; and the undersigned begs leave to state to Mr. Lawrence that they are lower than the rates which the French government at first fixed as being the lowest which they could properly agree to, namely, 2s. 8½d. and 1s. ½d. an ounce.

Her Majesty's government, therefore, hope that the United States government will, upon a further consideration of this matter, agree to the rates of postage proposed by the undersigned to Mr. Lawrence on the 9th of May last.

The undersigned has the honor to renew to Mr. Lawrence the assurances of his highest consideration.

PALMERSTON.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 178.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, April 30, 1852.

SIR: In my despatch No. 134, on the 24th of October last, I suggested the propriety of at once giving the requisite notice to annul the postal convention of December 15, 1848. Just before Lord Clanricarde left office, he informed me that he was about to submit a proposition to the French government for a new postal arrangement between this country and France, embracing the transit of closed mails from the United States. I had the honor to transmit a copy of this proposition to the Postmaster General on the 26th of March last. It would appear from the correspondence which I enclose that nothing has yet resulted from this step. When I look at the circumstances under which this negotiation has been conducted, and at the fact that the British office is a great gainer by the continuance of the present state of things, I cannot but again respectfully, but strongly, advise that the notice to annul the convention be given at once.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,
Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.

Mr. Lawrence to the Earl of Hardwicke.

Mr. Abbott Lawrence presents his compliments to the Earl of Hardwicke, and has the honor to ask his lordship what has been the result of a proposal made by her Majesty's Postmaster General to the French government upon the subject of a reduction of the transit-rate on postal matter to and from France and the United States via England, and also the rates between England and France. Mr. Lawrence will feel much obliged to the Earl of Hardwicke for an early reply.

UNITED STATES LEGATION,

April 24, 1852.

Mr. Maberly to Mr. Lawrence.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

April 28, 1852.

SIR: In reply to your excellency's letter of the 24th instant, I am directed by the Postmaster General to inform you that the Director General of the French post office announced to his lordship's predecessor, on the 2d ultimo, that he would submit to his government, with the least possible delay, the proposals made to him on the part of this office for a mutual reduction in the postage charged in the United Kingdom and in France upon international and transit letters.

Up to the present time, however, the Postmaster General has received no further communication from Monsieur Thayer on this subject.

I have the honor to be, sir, your excellency's obedient, humble servant,

W. MABERLY.

His Excellency ABBOTT LAWRENCE,

&c., &c., &c., U. S. Legation.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[No. 181.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

London, May 7, 1852.

SIR: I have had the honor to address you on several occasions on the subject of our postal arrangements, and to transmit my correspondence with this government relative to the rate charged for the transit of postal matter in closed bags through England to France. In my despatch No. 134, of the 24th of October last, and in some others of a subsequent date, and in private letters to the Postmaster General, I expressed the opinion that the postal rates between the United States and the United Kingdom were too high, and should be reduced. About four-tenths of the postage between the two countries is paid in Ireland, and the ratio is steadily increasing, in consequence of the large Irish population in the United States and the emigration still going forward.

The revenue derived from this branch of the postal service is no longer principally of a commercial character, but is obtained to a large extent from the correspondence of the most indigent classes of society. The tax falls mainly upon the adopted citizens of the United States, or upon those who have sought our shores with the expectation of becoming citizens.

The present ocean rate for letters is heavy and very disproportionate to the low inland rates adopted both in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is a great impediment in the way of the free correspondence so important to the moral and material interests of the United States.

I am unable to understand why a half-ounce letter should be transported three thousand miles in the United States (often in coaches, wagons, or on the backs of horses) at a charge of three cents, or to any part of the United Kingdom at a charge of two cents, while the rate for transporting the same letter by ship (much the cheapest mode of conveyance known) the same distance across the ocean is sixteen cents. I have thought, in view of the great advantages enjoyed under our system of cheap postage in the United States, and the long happy experience in this country of the workings of a similar system, that the present time might not be deemed unfavorable for proposing to extend it to the ocean. I had supposed that probably this would not be considered a financial question by the government of the United States, but one of a deeper interest to the people. Considering the vast extent of our country, the character of its inhabitants, its constitution, its laws, its free institutions, and the great and growing numbers of British-born persons among us, cheap postage between the two countries must produce the most beneficial results. We have much to gain and nothing to lose by adopting it. Our security for the preservation of our popular institutions rests upon the enlightenment of the people and the extension of knowledge. Perhaps nothing does more to diffuse that knowledge than the constant correspondence which takes place among the people of the United States; and were it extended to these islands, a corresponding advantage would be gained, as well as a broader foundation laid for the maintenance of amicable and happy relations between the two governments.

After our experience in the great increase of correspondence consequent upon the reduction of the inland rates of postage, there cannot, I think, be much doubt that a corresponding increase would take place were a reduction made in the sea-rates between this country and the United States. It would seem that the treasury of the United States is in a condition to try this experiment, if it be an experiment. During the first two or three years, perhaps, some aid from the treasury would be required. But it seems to me that the amount which may be temporarily necessary will be of small importance, compared with the immense benefits to result from it.

If anything is to be done immediately in this matter, the example must be set in the United States. I think that the great body of the people in this country are in favor of the system; but I have some doubt whether the government will not view the question entirely in a financial light, and be unwilling to make any sacrifice. They main-

tain a steam navy in part by their high ocean postal rates to almost every part of the globe.

During the great exhibition of 1851, an association was formed for the purpose of promoting a cheap and uniform system of international postage for letters and printed papers; and a large committee was appointed, which has had the subject under consideration. A few days since, several of those gentlemen called upon me, as a deputation from the general committee, for the purpose of discussing the question. Lord Ashburton is the chairman of the general committee, and was to have been the chairman of the deputation, but was prevented from attending by illness. The deputation consisted of Sir John Boileau, bart., Sir John Burgoyne, K. C. B., William Brown, esq., M. P., H. Cole, esq., and several other gentlemen of high character and standing. They stated that the system of cheap oceanic postage must begin in the United States; that, when commenced, it would, in their judgment, be adopted here from necessity, as, in case of refusal on the part of this government, all the correspondence between the two countries would be transmitted by American vessels, since no government, in the present state of opinion, would probably wish to renew the severe measures pursued towards the Washington; and that their efforts would now be given to effecting a cheap international postage between the United Kingdom and the United States.

I will not dwell further upon this subject, but close with expressing the hope that, at the present session of Congress, the question may be brought before it, and that, in its wisdom, it may adopt such a measure as will conduce to the best interests of our country.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ABBOTT LAWRENCE.

Mr. Lawrence to Mr. Webster.

[Extract.]

[No. 206.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
London, September 30, 1852.

SIR: * * * * Another subject then pending here is not yet brought to a conclusion: I mean the negotiations for the execution of the 12th article of the postal convention of 1848. In my despatch No. 3 I reviewed the history of the negotiations up to that time, and expressed my opinion that, in the event of the continued rejection of our just claims by this government, we ought to give the notice to annul that convention. The rejection which I anticipated followed. This government showed itself hostile to a settlement on just terms; and I had the satisfaction to find my course approved by the Postmaster General. But, unfortunately, the approval was not coupled with an authority to give the notice, and no advance has been made.

In connexion with this subject, I have several times urged upon the government the propriety of taking some steps for the reduction of the rates of ocean postage. Although I have heard nothing in reply, I am led

to hope, from the manifest policy of such a course, that the subject has occupied the attention of the proper departments, and that something will eventually be done.

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Mr. Hubbard to Mr. Everett.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

January 14, 1853.

SIR: With reference to the accompanying resolution of the Senate, adopted on the 11th instant, calling on the President for information in regard to the execution of the postal convention between the United States and Great Britain, (presuming the correspondence between the Hon. Abbott Lawrence, late minister to England, and the British Minister of Foreign Affairs will be referred to as showing the action of our own and the British government on this subject,) I beg leave to call your attention to the letter from this department to the Secretary of State of June 21, 1851, as containing important facts relating to this subject. I would remark that all the advantages therein pointed out as accruing to the British government by our postage law of 1851 are now enjoyed by that government, including the privilege of a closed mail to California at the reduced rates of postage under that law.

It is proper also to observe that, since that letter was written, the postal convention therein alluded to as then pending between the United States and Prussia has been executed, and was put in operation in October last, the British government having, by an agreement with Prussia, consented to a reduction to seventeen and a half cents an ounce on the letter mails to be transmitted as closed mails through England under said convention; and official notice has also been given to this department that the British transit charge on closed mails, if sent between the United States and Belgium through England, will be twenty cents an ounce. These are the only changes of any importance since the date of that letter.

The existing postal convention between the United States and Great Britain, I understand, was negotiated upon this basis, viz: that the mails of the United States to be transmitted through the United Kingdom to or from foreign countries beyond were to be charged with the same postage, and have the same facilities, as were then, or should thereafter be, provided for the British mails between the United Kingdom and such foreign countries, respectively; and that the British mails through the United States were to have the facilities for transportation, and be subject to the same rates of postage, established for our own mails. Thus, while the United States mails sent through England are subject to the high rates established on correspondence between England and the Continent, &c., the British mails sent through the United States have the advantage of our reduced rates.

It appears to me it would have been more just to have secured for our mails advantages equal to those extended by the United States

to the British mails. Then each country could have had it always in its power to claim an equivalent for any new favor or facility granted to the other, in the way of a reduction, under the operation of its own laws.

However, the most serious cause of complaint in this matter is found in the fact that the United States and French correspondence is excluded even from the benefits of the present treaty; and the stipulation relating to France in the 12th article of the treaty has not, in my judgment, been complied with on the part of the British government—at least not in the spirit of liberality clearly demanded by the right and justice of the case. All which, I am confident, will be fully shown by the correspondence above referred to between our minister and the British Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Any further particulars on the subject within the knowledge of this department I shall be happy to furnish, should you desire it.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. D. HUBBARD,

Postmaster General.

HON. EDWARD EVERETT,

Secretary of State.